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“Smarthinking” On-Line Tutorial Pilot Program Off And Running

BATON ROUGE - Training for an on-line college tutorial pilot program provided by the Louisiana Board of Regents was conducted this week in Shreveport, Alexandria and Baton Rouge. The training was designed to prepare Louisiana college faculty and campus personnel to help on-line and traditional students alike take advantage of the wide variety of on-line tutorial services that will be available during the spring semester.

In October the Louisiana Board of Regents approved a six-month pilot program to provide on-line tutoring for Louisiana college students enrolled in electronically-delivered classes and degree programs. The pilot phase of this innovative tutorial program, provided by Smarthinking.com, a Washington, D.C.- based electronic learning company, will offer students free, on-line, one-on-one tutoring sessions in core curriculum subjects such as mathematics, chemistry and writing. Students will even be able to take advantage of an on-line writing lab, which will allow professional evaluation of writing assignments in progress.

From January 1 through June 30 of 2003, the Board of Regents will provide 900 hours of on-line tutoring at no cost to students. Tutoring will be available 24 hours a day, seven days a week from Smarthinking’s global faculty of highly-qualified, degreed educators, some 80% of which hold master’s degrees or higher. Accounts are set up through the institution in which the student is enrolled, and students need only have internet access to take advantage of the service.

Once registered, a student may drop in on a real-time, subject-specific tutoring “whiteboard” with a Smarthinking “e-structor,” submit a writing assignment to the on-line writing lab for review, pre-schedule time with an individual tutor or take advantage of host of other independent study resources.

“The growth of electronic learning in recent years has made access to college instruction a reality for people who otherwise have been prevented by geography or personal circumstances from continuing their education,” said Commissioner of Higher Education Joe Savoie. “On-line tutoring is the next logical step in this evolution of electronic education access. Providing strong academic support to students in need of assistance is vital to ensure the success of distance education.”

At the end of the six-month pilot period, the Board of Regents will evaluate the success of the program and decide on the next step. For more information on Smarthinking and Louisiana’s electronic campus, contact Mike Abiatti at the Board of Regents (225-342-4253).

